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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7038  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1617  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7044  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 5496  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 9674  
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 6564  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 001201

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, NSC FOR PHU

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SUBJECT: THAILAND: RESPONSE TO ASSK'S ARREST

REF: BANGKOK 1188

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Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reason 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Thai FM Kasit held a press conference May 15 to express concern over Aung San Suu Kyi's (ASSK) situation, to call on the Burmese government not to extend her detention, and to ask the Burmese authorities to clarify the situation about the Amcit swimmer who visited ASSK's compound. Kasit added that the ASEAN MFA Permanent Secretaries would discuss the matter further when they met in Phuket May 19 but predicted a lack of common stance on the issue. Ambassador engaged MFA PermSec Virasak late May 14 to urge the Thai to issue an ASEAN statement in Bangkok's capacity as Chair. Thai media reported that Thai PM Abhisit expressed concern on behalf of ASEAN after ASSK's May 14 arrest. At a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand (FCCT), ASEAN Interparliamentary Caucus (AIPMC) Chair Kraisaak Choonhaven commended Kraisaak's comments and called for ASEAN to realize that the 2010 elections would solve nothing in Burma as long as there were 2100 political prisoners; Burmese exiles criticized both the arrest and called for a more vigorous international response. End Summary.

Thais see ASEAN as split; Kasit holds a press conference  
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¶2. (C) Ambassador talked to MFA PermSec Virasak late May 14, urging a strong ASEAN statement. Virasak confirmed Thai efforts to engage ASEAN countries on a possible joint response (reftel), but noted the likely split within ASEAN on any possible statement. The Thai expected support from the Indonesians, Filipinos, and Singaporeans but not from the others - leaving Thailand with the option to issue a Chair statement as Singapore did in NY in Sept 2007 during the suppression of the Saffron Uprising. Virasak said that initial Thai soundings with ASEAN country ambassadors based in Rangoon confirmed the lack of ASEAN consensus currently. He suggested any statement would focus on ASSK's humanitarian situation, avoiding the wider political agenda and trying to leave the door open for the Burmese to step back.

¶3. (SBU) Thai media reported that Thai PM Abhisit provided the only SEAsian public reaction to ASSK's arrest May 14, quoting Abhisit as saying that ASEAN was "concerned" with the

latest development. Abhisit added: "We would like to see positive steps being taking according to the roadmap. It is very important the political process is inclusive."

¶4. (SBU) FM Kasit held a press conference midday May 15 to weigh in publicly on ASSK's situation; he had previously written his Burmese counterpart May 14 expressing concern (reftel). Kasit stressed three points:

- he had already expressed concern over ASSK's health and her access to proper medical treatment (note: via the May 14 letter);
- the Burmese government should not extend ASSK's detention, because this violated the principle of national reconciliation in the regime's own road map, as reflected in the ASEAN declaration at the 14th ASEAN Summit held recently in Cha-Am, Thailand; and
- the Burmese authorities should clarify the legal process regarding the Amcit who had swum to ASSK's compound.

¶5. (U) In the question and answers, FM Kasit noted that Secretary Clinton had already reached out to ASEAN SecGen Surin Pitsuwan. ASEAN would discuss the matter further at an ASEAN SOM to be held May 19 in Phuket. For the time being, however, ASEAN did not have a common stance on the issue.

Kraisak and Burmese Exiles blast regime at FCCT event  
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¶6. (SBU) AIPMC Chair Kraisak, a deputy leader of the ruling Democrat Party and one of Thailand's leading Burma activists, joined Burmese exiles at the FCCT May 15 to blast ASSK's arrest. Kraisak said AIPMC had issued two letters of protest. Kraisak characterized the Thai government's

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response as slow, but he praised Kasit's concern over ASSK's arrest and noted that this was the first time in eight years that a Thai FM had been concerned about ASSK. Kraisak added that the government of Indonesia had responded strongly to the arrest of ASSK. ASEAN governments should redirect their presumption that 2010 general elections would solve Burma's impasse and focus on the reality that 2000 political prisoners, preventing any reconciliation or forward movement, Kraisak concluded.

¶7. (SBU) At the same event, Nyo Ohn Myint, Foreign Affairs Minister for the National League for Democracy-Liberated Areas/National Coalition Union of Burma, stated that ASSK's arrest was politically motivated in response to a recent reconciliation offer from ASSK's National League for Democracy Party (NLD). Nyo recommended that the UN should hold an emergency session on the arrest of ASSK and that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon travel to Burma. Nyo thought that a process similar to the Six-Party Talks on North Korea was needed for Burma, including the U.S., EU, China, and ASEAN.

¶8. (SBU) Thin Thin Aung, Presidium Board Member of Women's League of Burma cautioned that a mass protest led by the NLD may occur if ASSK is allowed to be charged and suggested that the GoB intended for ASSK to be in this "trap" before the 2010 elections. Nyo stated that 2010 elections in Burma would not be free and fair.

JOHN